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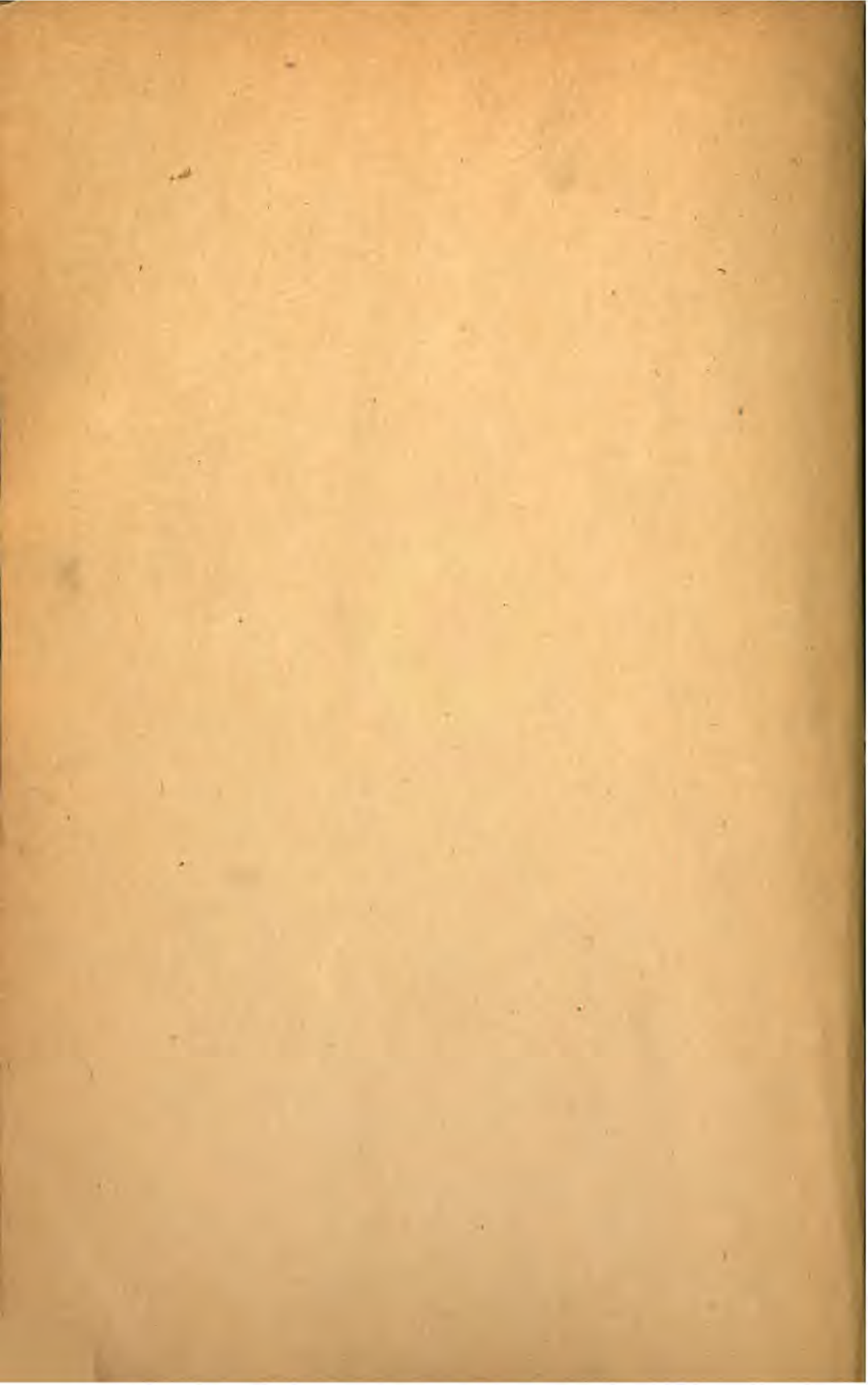
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**Bulletin of the**  
**Virginia State Library**  
*(Issued Quarterly)*

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Vol. XI                      JULY, OCTOBER, 1918                      Nos. 3, 4

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**An Analysis of Ruffin's Farmers' Register, with a Bibliography of Edmund Ruffin**

*By* EARL G. SWEM  
*Assistant State Librarian*



**RICHMOND:**  
**DAVIS BOTTOM, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC PRINTING**  
**1919**



## PUBLICATIONS OF THE VIRGINIA STATE LIBRARY.

The titles marked with an asterisk can no longer be supplied.

- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1619-1658. Ed. by H. R. McIlwaine. 1915. 283 p. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1659-60-1693. Ed. by H. R. McIlwaine. 1914. 529 p. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1695-1702. Ed. by H. R. McIlwaine. 1913. 414 p. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1702-1712. Ed. by H. R. McIlwaine. 1912. 369 p. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1712-1726. Ed. by H. R. McIlwaine. 1911. 441 p. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1727-1740. Ed. by H. R. McIlwaine. 1910. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1742-1749. Ed. by H. R. McIlwaine. 1909. 427 p. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1752-1758. Ed. by H. R. McIlwaine. 1909. 551 p. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1758-1761. Ed. by H. R. McIlwaine. 1908. 313 p. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1761-1765. Ed. by J. P. Kennedy. 1907. 383 p. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1766-1769. Ed. by J. P. Kennedy. 1906. 372 p. \$10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1770-1772. Ed. by J. P. Kennedy. 1906. 333 p. 10.
- Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1773-1776. Ed. by J. P. Kennedy. 1905. 201 p. \$10.
- Legislative Journals of the Council of Virginia. Volume 1. Edited by H. R. McIlwaine. 1918. 591 p. \$10. Not ready for sale or distribution until volume 3 is printed.
- Legislative Journals of the Council of Virginia. Volume 2. Edited by H. R. McIlwaine. 1918. p. 592-1113. 10. Not ready for sale or distribution until volume 3 is printed.
- Legislative Journals of the Council of Virginia. Volume 3. Edited by H. R. McIlwaine. In press.
- First annual report of the Library Board for year ending June 30, 1904. 1904. 106 p.
- Second annual report of the Library Board for year ending October 31, 1905. 1905. 134 p.
- Third annual report of the Library Board for year ending October 31, 1906. 1906. 152 p.
- \*Fourth annual report of the Library Board for year ending October 31, 1907. 1907. 134 p. Appendix C. List of manuscripts exhibited by the Library at the Jamestown Exposition. Appendix D. Provisional list of works on genealogy in the State Library.
- \*Fifth annual report of the Library Board for year ending October 31, 1908. 1908. 132, 302, 154 p. Special report: A calendar of legislative petitions, Accomac to Bedford, by H. J. Eckenrode, 302 p. \$1.00. Special report: A trial bibliography of colonial Virginia, 1608-1754, by W. C. Torrence. 154 p. \$ .50.
- Sixth annual report of the Library Board for year ending October 31, 1909. 1909. 96, 164, 94 p. Special report: Separation of church and state in Virginia, by H. J. Eckenrode. 164 p. \$1.00. Special report: A trial bibliography of colonial Virginia, 1754-1776, by W. C. Torrence. 94 p. \$ .50.

(Continued on p. 3 of Cover.)

# Bulletin *of the* Virginia State Library

(Issued Quarterly)



1918  
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RICHMOND:  
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# Bulletin *of the* Virginia State Library

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## An Analysis of Ruffin's Farmers' Register, with a Bibliography of Edmund Ruffin

By EARL G. SWEM  
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## Introductory Note

The "Farmers' Register" was a monthly magazine of 64 pages, edited and published by Edmund Ruffin from June, 1833, to December, 1842. It was the second agricultural periodical published in Virginia. The first was the "Virginia Farmer," edited and published by Theodorick McRobert at Scottsville.\* A short time after the advent of the Register, the "Virginia Farmer" ceased publication. Mr. Ruffin published his magazine under many difficulties. Although he had acquired a competence from farming as the result of the most patient investigation and most efficient management of the ancestral estate at Coggin's Point for the preceding twenty years, yet he had to overcome a strong popular prejudice against "book farming." Correspondents who were willing to write to him of farming conditions in other parts of the State were few, and could not be depended upon to write regularly. It was necessary therefore for him to prepare many of the papers in the Register himself, and sign them with initials that would not disclose the identity of the writer. In the N. F. Cabell manuscripts relating to agriculture in Virginia (now in the Virginia State Library), there is a list of all the anonymous authors in the ten volumes of the Register. This list was compiled by Mr. Ruffin at the request of Mr. Cabell. By means of this list, I have been able, in preparing this analysis, to determine the authors' names of nearly all the unsigned or anonymously signed articles. Mr. Cabell remarks that the large number of papers he found that Mr. Ruffin had written, and which no one had suspected were from his pen, was a distinct revelation to him. In addition to original contributions by himself and other Southern correspondents, he reprinted, occasionally, selected articles from American, British, and French agricultural journals.

In preparing this analysis, I have included references only to original contributions and to reprinted papers from southern periodicals.

The publisher made no money from the Register. He had undertaken it with no thought of pecuniary profit, but hoped that it would at least pay expenses. In order to be independent, he refused all advertisements, and would not use his editorial columns for "puffing" commercial projects which he knew to be dishonest. He eschewed all reference to politics until the volumes issued in 1841 and 1842. The intolerable burdens of the state banking system as then administered, he could bear no longer without some remonstrance. He spoke plainly and incisively. To his attitude at this time may be due the loss of some of the patronage of the Register, which he abandoned in December, 1842.

The "Farmers' Register" in its ten volumes is one of the most authoritative sources we have for the study of agricultural and other economic questions of the ante-bellum period in Virginia. And yet most students and writers have entirely neglected it, preferring to examine and quote the superficial and biased accounts of travelers in Virginia, and the partisan mis-statements of political speakers and newspaper editors. Mr. Ruffin was a hater of ignorance, of pretense, of self-satisfaction, whether displayed in the Virginia farmer who refused to acknowledge that farming could be written about, or in the northern agitator who believed that all economic ills of Virginia could be traced to slavery. These characteristics, coupled with his deep suspicion of professional politicians both north and south, give the Register a marked individuality.

When only 18 years of age, in 1812, he began his career as a farmer. A copy of John Taylor's "Arator" falling into his hands, he determined to apply some of the principles therein taught, to the development of his

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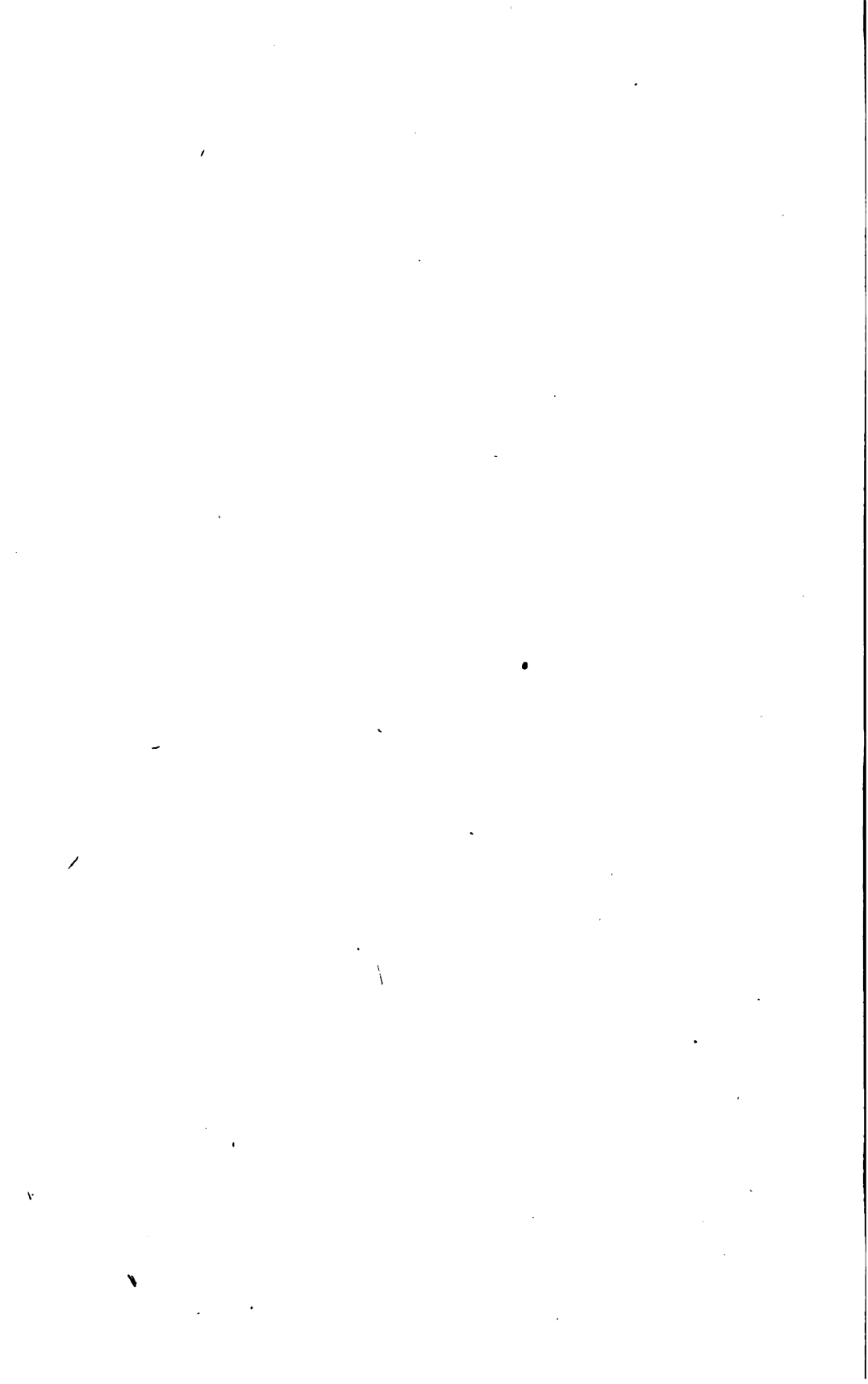
\*See note on "The Virginia Farmer" by Alfred Morrison in the "William and Mary College Quarterly," v. 23, p. 172. No copies of "The Virginia Farmer" are known to be extant. Several numbers were issued, but how many is not known.

estate at Coggin's Point on the James River. He found that he could not apply Taylor's suggestions to his own farm, and not being content to stand still or retrograde, he began to make experiments for himself. With the aid of Davy's "Agricultural Chemistry," he trained himself to be an original investigator, and in a few years he had developed his theory of the need of lime in the old soils of Virginia. He discovered on his farm, in the beds of marl, that the estate could supply its own fertilizer. After more experiments, he published the results of his observations in the "American Farmer" in 1821, vol. 3, page 313. This was the first appearance of his "Essay on Calcareous Manures," though the first edition did not appear in book form till 1832. A second edition was published in 1835, a third in 1842, a fourth in 1844, and a fifth in 1852. In the estimation of students of American agriculture, this work remains to-day one of the most exhaustive and thorough studies ever made upon an agricultural subject by an American writer. Though the use of marl in Eastern Virginia has been abandoned, due to the higher cost of labor, and to the cheapness of commercial fertilizer, no one denies that in Mr. Ruffin's time his doctrine of the use of marl was sound.\* The revival and successful development of Virginia agriculture in the period 1830-1860 was due as much to the use of marl as to any one other cause. No better proof of the value of marl can be found than the reports which Ruffin occasionally published of the increased production of his own farms. One cannot read his "Farming Profits in Eastern Virginia" in the "Southern Planter," v. 9, 1849, p. 226-237, without deep admiration for his genius.

EARL G. SWEM.

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\*It is interesting to observe that during the present war the United States Department of Agriculture investigated the marl beds in Eastern Virginia with a view to advocating the use of marl both during and after the war.



# Bulletin of the Virginia State Library

(Issued Quarterly)

Vol. XI

JULY, OCTOBER, 1918

Nos. 3, 4

## Bibliographical Note

**The farmers' register:** a monthly publication, devoted to the improvement of the practice, and support of the interests of agriculture . . . Edmund Ruffin, editor and proprietor.

v. 1 and 2 bear the imprint "Shellbanks, Va." v. 3-10 have the imprint "Petersburg, Va."

Volume 1, 1833/34. xii (title page and index), 776 p. No. 1 was issued in June, 1833, No. 12 in May, 1834. p. 769-776 is a list of subscribers.

Volume 2, 1834/35. xi (title page and index), 776, viii, 116 p. No. 1 was issued in June, 1834, No. 12 in May, 1835. A supplement, p. 257-264 was issued to No. 4, and a supplement of viii, 116 p. to No. 12, being the 2d ed. of the Essay on calcareous manures.

Volume 3, 1835/1836. ix (title page and index). 768 p. No. 1 was issued in May 1835 (No. 12 of v. 2 also having been issued in May 1835); No. 12 was issued in April, 1836.

Volume 4, 1836/37. viii (title page and index), 768 p. No. 1 was issued in May, 1836, and No. 12 in April, 1837.

Volume 5, 1837/38. vii (title page and index), 768 p. No. 1 was issued in May, 1837, No. 8 on Dec. 1, 1837, No. 9 on Dec. 15, 1837, and No. 12 in March, 1838.

Volume 6, 1838. vii (title page and index), 768 p. No. 1 was issued in April, 1838, and No. 12 in Dec. 1838. Davy's Agricultural Chemistry was printed in full as Nos. 10 and 11, but with no date heading; instead of numbering this "Nos. 10 and 11," it bears "number 11." Mr. Ruffin made this arrangement in order to begin his volume with the calendar year.

Volume 7, 1839. vii (title page and index), 768 p. No. 1 was published in Jan. 1839, and No. 12 in December, 1839.

Volume 8, 1840. vii (title page and index), 772 p. No. 1 was published in Jan. 1840, and No. 12 in Dec. 1840. The December No. was a reprint of Arator by John Taylor, being the 7th ed. of this work.

Volume 9, 1841. vii (title page and index), 720, 144 p. The first number was issued in January, 1841, and No. 12 in December, 1841. In Oct. the publication of Byrd's Westover mss. was begun with separate paging, and was continued in the following months until completed in December in 144 p. This was intended by the editor as a supplement and should be bound with the Register volume 9.

Volume 10, 1842. v (title page and index), 524, 316 p. No. 1 was issued in Jan. 1842, and No. 12 in December, 1842. The issue for Dec. is No. 12 and supplement, and is the third edition of the Essay on calcareous manures in 316 p.

Volume 11, 1843. Mr. Ruffin ceased to be editor with the Dec. 1842 Number. Mr. T. S. Pleasants became editor and proprietor. Several numbers were issued in 1843, and then the publication was abandoned. I have never seen any copies of volume 11.

# Virginia

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

- [Dabney, Augustin] On the tide water district of Virginia [a reply to James E. Heath's article on Virginia on p. 1-5]. v. 1, p. 155, 156. 1
- Reply to J [ames] E. H[earth]. Culture and products of lower Virginia. v. 1, p. 283-285. 2
- [Heath, James Ewell] General description of Virginia from the Encyclopedia americana. v. 1, p. 1-5. 3
- General description of Virginia, reply to the remarks of G. W. F., and the strictures of Mockjack. v. 1, p. 195-197. 4

## HISTORY

- [Beverly, Robert]. Extracts from Beverly's history of Virginia. Of the earths and soils. v. 7, p. 667-668. 5
- Of the [ancient] currency and valuation of coins in Virginia. From Beverly's "History of Virginia." v. 7, p. 703-704. 6
- Byrd, William. The earliest passage through the Dismal Swamp. v. 4, p. 593-599. 7
- Proposal to drain the Dismal Swamp. v. 4, p. 521-524. 8
- Campbell, Charles. Nathaniel Bacon. Reply to strictures. By Charles Campbell, of Petersburg. v. 7, p. 527-529. 9
- Scraps from old authors respecting Virginia. v. 3, p. 438, 439. 10
- Clayton, John. Clayton's letters from Virginia in 1688. v. 4, p. 584-587, 641-644. 11
- Kercheval, Samuel. Mode of living of the primitive settlers of the Valley of Virginia. [Reprinted] from Kercheval's History of the Valley of Virginia. v. 8, p. 656-658. 12
- Observations in several voyages and travels in America. Some account of a voyage from New York to Senepuxon in Maryland. [Reprinted] from the London magazine for 1746. v. 5, p. 81-85, 146-150. 13
- Randolph, Richard. Reminiscences of Jamestown. Bacon's rebellion. By Richard Randolph, of Williamsburg. v. 7, p. 407-408. 14
- [Ruffin, Edmund] Curious extracts from the ancient laws of Virginia. v. 6, p. 558-563; 711-717; v. 7, p. 181-183. 15
- Extracts from the old laws and records of Virginia. Sir William Berkeley's account of Virginia in 1671 [with criticism by Edmund Ruffin]. v. 7, p. 238-240. 16
- Sketches on the habits and manners of old times in Virginia. Fragment of a manuscript. v. 5, p. 577-580. 17
- [Ruffin, Edmund, Jr.] "The stone house" [of James City county]. v. 9, p. 710-711. 18
- "Shipping in good order and well conditioned." Relative to importation of wives for early settlers of Virginia. [Reprinted] from the Alexandria gazette. v. 8, p. 585. 19
- Smith, John. The most ancient description of Virginia, extracted from the "The true travels, adventures and observations of Captaine John Smith. v. 4, p. 389-394. 20

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- B., A.** On the true principles of profitable husbandry [showing that capital should be bestowed in Virginia on the improvement of the soil, and not on the increase of labor]. v. 2, p. 265, 266. 21
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- [Barnard, J. H.]** Statements of practice in tillage and improvement, on Rappahannock river. v. 4, p. 61-63. 23
- [Beekman, Dr. J. S.]** Farming in Virginia and New York. v. 1, p. 750. 24
- [Booth, E. G., of Nottoway]** General topics connected with agriculture, agricultural societies, etc. v. 2, p. 564, 565. 25
- [Coalter, Judge John]** Cheap farming. v. 1, p. 186. 26
- Dickinson, John [of Moor's Mount].** Desultory observations on the improvement of Virginia. Silk culture. Marling. Female labor. v. 3, p. 475-478. 27
- Observations on the agricultural improvement, and the public works of Virginia. v. 1, p. 265-267. 28
- Eastern Virginia.** By A reclaimed wanderer. v. 7, p. 210. 29
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- Grazing farms in the valley of Virginia.** [Note.] v. 1, p. 631. 39
- [Harrison, Randolph.]** On the importance of farmers giving personal attention and labor to their farms. v. 4, p. 1, 2, 183-185. 40
- [Heath, James E.]** A description of the valley of the Kanawha, by a low-lander, in a letter to a friend. v. 1, p. 525-528. 41
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- [Morton, W. S.]** The connexion of agriculture with other sciences, and remarks on soils and manures [with particular reference to Virginia]. v. 2, p. 713-715. 43
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- Proceedings [and memorial] of the agricultural convention [in Richmond, Jan. 11, 1836]. v. 3, p. 619-626. 48
- R. [of Goochland]. Emigration to the West. v. 4, p. 732, 733. 49
- [Randolph, T. J.] Observations on the red lands of the southwest mountains. v. 2, p. 315, 316. 50
- [Ruffin, Edmund.] The advantages and defects of agricultural societies. v. 1, p. 200, 201. 51
- Agricultural societies. v. 9, p. 57. 52
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- Constitutions of agricultural societies. v. 3, p. 575. 55
- The different advantages of large and small farms considered; and the injuries caused to agriculture, and to a nation, by frequent and injudicious changes in the outlines and limits of farms. v. 4, p. 564-569. 56
- Extract from the records of the united agricultural societies of Virginia. Report on agricultural premiums. Approved Dec. 6, 1822. v. 1, p. 147-149. 57
- Failure of the agricultural convention, and of the petition for a board of agriculture. v. 5, p. 63. 58
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- Peculiar advantages of Virginia in agricultural products. v. 4, p. 127. 63
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- Prospects of agriculture in Virginia. v. 5, p. 127-128. 65
- Remarks on the soils in general, and particularly the ridge lands, of Eastern Virginia. v. 8, p. 168-171. 66
- Report to the State board of agriculture on the most important recent improvements of agriculture in lower Virginia—and the most important defects yet remaining. v. 10, p. 257-266. 67
- Sale of Virginia lands in London. v. 3, p. 59. 68
- Some of the blessings of emigrating to the North-Western States. v. 6, p. 521-522. 69
- Sketch of the progress of agriculture in Virginia, and the causes of its decline, and present depression; an address to the historical and philosophical society of Virginia, Feb. 1836. v. 3, p. 748-760. 70
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# A Bibliography of Edmund Ruffin

## PAPERS ABOUT EDMUND RUFFIN.

The article in De Bow's review, and the papers by W. P. Cutter, H. G. Ellis, and Dr. L. G. Tyler are the longest and best articles about Ruffin. Biographical notices appeared in the newspapers and agricultural journals at the time of his death, but no attempt has been made to list these.

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**Edmund Ruffin, of Virginia**, agriculturist, embracing a view of agricultural progress in Virginia for the last thirty years, with a portrait. 2065

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In John P. Branch historical papers of Randolph-Macon college. v. 3, no. 2. June, 1910. p. 99-123.

This is an excellent contribution with helpful notes.

**The first gun at Sumter** [reprinted from the Richmond times]. 2067

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In Virginia state agricultural society. Journal of transactions. v. 1, 1853, p. 72-85.

**Ruffin, Julian M.** Who fired the first gun at Sumter. 2070

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**Skinner, J. S.** Ruffin on calcareous manures [a review]. 2071

In American farmer. v. 14, 1832. p. 113.

**Tyler, Lyon G.** Edmund Ruffin, an address delivered at the Virginia polytechnic institute, Blacksburg, Va., April 25, 1913 [1913]. 2072  
15 p. 8vo.

## BOOKS, PAPERS AND ADDRESSES BY EDMUND RUFFIN.

This list is far from exhaustive. It contains the titles of the principal books and pamphlets by Ruffin, but lacks the titles of a good many papers and addresses, published in the newspapers, and in agricultural periodicals to which I have not had access. The titles of the many papers written by Ruffin and printed in the Farmers' register, and which appear in the preceding analysis, are not repeated here.

**An address on the opposite results of exhausting and fertilizing systems of agriculture**, read before the South Carolina institute, at its fourth annual fair, November 18, 1852. By Edmund Ruffin . . . . Charleston, Press of Walker and James, 1853. 2073  
52 p. 22½cm.

This address was reprinted in the Southern planter, v. 20, 1860, p. 401-408, 481-486; in De Bow's review, v.

14, 1853, p. 34-46; and in U. S. Patent office report on agriculture, 1852, p. 373-389.

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This was transmitted by Ruffin, as secretary, and it may have been written by him.

In American farmer. v. 2, 1820, p. 57-59.

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In *Southern planter*. v. 13, 1853, p. 8-16 of supplement of Jan. no. 1853?  
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- The advantages of ploughing land in wide beds, compared to the ordinary narrow beds. 2076  
In *American farmer*. v. 7, July, 1851, p. 20-22; Aug. 1851, p. 49-51.
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xi. [13]-296 p. 23 cm.
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- Seventh annual report of the Library Board for year ending October 31, 1910. 1911. 142, 52, 47 p. A record of Virginia copyright entries. 1790-1844. Introduction by J. H. Whitty, 52 p. The seal of Virginia, by E. S. Evans, 47 p.
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